DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

AUGUST, 1942

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Make Up Your Mind, Mr. Dalton

THE President of the Board of Trade answering a question in the House, inferred that the Film Industry could look for no guarantee that its present inadequate studio space could be maintained, neither could there be any guarantee that there would be no further calls upon its already restricted man-power. This is a serious statement for a responsible Minister to make, for obviously no such statement would have been made without serious consideration. If further studio space and man-power are withdrawn it will hasten the disintegration of the British film production industry. The President made some pious remarks on the subject of Government and Service film units and he paternally patted them on the head stating that their interests would be protected. Does this statement of Mr. Dalton's mean that an industry which successive Presidents of the Board of Trade have been at such pains to build up, is going to be allowed to die without serious consideration of the factors involved?

It is some fifteen years since the Quota Act was placed on the statute book to ensure the maintenance of a living British Film Industry. The new Quota Act of 1938 has only been in operation for four years, more than two of them while the country has been at war. All that was said when the Act was drawn up remains true and even more true for a country that is fighting to keep its own culture and way of life alive. What stirring speeches were made and what clamorous articles were written, what battles were fought with reluctant American film interests to ensure that Britain should not only express herself to her own people by film but that her culture and way of life should be shown to the world! Can it be that when we need full sympathy and understanding among the Allied nations, one medium of our expression should be sacrificed to stack a few more tons of sugar in a film studio or recruit a few hundred men for the armed forces? Even now the rate of British feature film production has dropped from two hundred in pre-war years to around forty in the last year.

Cinema's Vital Part

It is strange too that the film industry should be faced with these possibilities when so many successive members of the War Government have paid tribute to the cinema's vital part in maintaining morale and in propaganda.

It has been recognised in America that their film industry is a vital part of the war effort. Can it be that in the different attitudes of America and Britain towards *film* lies the answer to the continued neglect and possible further restrictions of the British industry? In America the cinema is a part of everybody's life from the Executive downwards. Going to the movies to them is as integral a part of their lives as having food. Whereas here, certainly the governing classes (and this includes Labour, Liberal and Conservative politicians and civil servants) regard the films as something vaguely not quite nice—the "flicks". That this is so has been continually proved by the governing classes' lack of interest in the potentialities of the film.

There is no doubt that a good deal of the mistrust and dislike of the film industry in responsible circles arises from the fact that the cinema industry is exceedingly immature. Morally and financially its methods are still those of the nineteenth century. In America after some forty years, the industry has become reasonably mature and respected. For the reason that our industry here is still in such an immature state of development, its leaders are frequently the Barnums from the early days, or financial gamblers.

Forty Films a Year

This highly individualistic, anarchic industry too, does not lend itself to organised representation, in fact it is only likely to come together when its financial interests are threatened. This has been the cinema industry's greatest failing for many years. Still to-day, when the film production industry is severely threatened it has become apparent that no joint organised representations are to be made to the Board of Trade, but each individual trade association has seen or will see the Board of Trade to represent their own interests—or the national interest as they frequently put it.

The situation then is roughly as follows. With its depleted studio staffs and with studio space at a premium, the feature film production industry can with luck produce forty films a year if it loses no further studio space and no more personnel. The American feature films imported into this country will be roughly four hundred, so British screens will carry far less than ten per cent of British films. It should be pointed out here that the Quota Act obliges all cinema owners to show fifteen per cent British films. Although they manifestly cannot carry this out, and none of them were very keen about it at any time, the Board of Trade has no plan and by not supporting the film industry, is denying its own Act.

In addition it appears that Government and Service film units are to be fully protected and given every facility. It is to be wondered whether past instances of film technicians being de-reserved, then called into the army and thence transferred to a Service film unit, are to be repeated, only in a more wholesale manner. Is studio space and equipment to be diverted to those units on the same basis? It would be interesting to have a report on what effective work the technicians in these Government and Service units are doing and whether their ever-increasing requisitioned equipment is being put to proper use. In factory terms—has anyone examined the comparative quantity and quality of their output. Again, the President

of the Board of Trade made no mention of that very important section of the film production industry—the commercial makers of Government films. Are they likely to retain their already over-burdened and over-worked staffs? Are they likely to retain their insufficient equipment and inadequate studio space? They are the people who made the short propaganda film possible in this country. It appears, however, that they are no concern of the Board of Trade, though many of them are linked with the feature film industry and all of them are dependent on an active feature film industry being in existence—personnel, studios, laboratories, etc.

What everybody is looking for, from the Board of Trade officials to the lowliest technician, is a plan. In default of a plan we may well see a competition between four interests to gain control: the first interest is monopoly American capital, which would like to see independent production in this country come under its control. That the Americans succeeded in doing this in the last war when British films were in a much stronger position, is to them a happy augury of things to come. By the elimination of independent British production they would succeed in controlling all production and so be able to dictate their own terms for the rental of films to the second competitor—British monopoly capital. This competitor, in the body of the circuit interests, has control of the majority of the best cinemas of this country. It hopes by controlling more and more cinemas to dictate the terms which will pay for American films. It is, therefore, in their interests to maintain as much British production as possible in case the American interests should withhold their films or sell against them in order to obtain better terms.

The third competitor is probably a weak entry, but it is conceivable that the Board of Trade, being unable to reconcile the warring interests, may propound a mild version of state capitalism similar to the National Coal Board. These proposals will probably throw British and American monopoly capital into one another's arms and the bureaucratic proposals would then undoubtedly be defeated. The fourth competitor is monopoly British Labour. One branch of the vested interests of Labour in the film trade has already put forward a plan for the complete nationalisation of the film production industry. This competitor is not likely to be a strong entry at the moment, as all the Trades Unions representing cinema workers are not yet united. The plans for nationalisation are not likely to make much headway until the capitalist power grows much weaker. The most this interest can hope for is that it might bring about the objectives of competitor No. 3.

These are the four warring interests jostling for position, and still the film production industry grows smaller and its facilities less.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

So So

JOE SEIDELMAN is in London. You may not have heard of him—but he has heard of you. The following paragraphs from *Today's Cinema* will explain why: "The enthusiastic tribute he (Joe) paid to C. M. Woolf and the G.F.D. set-up was no lip service. Universal know how much they owe to C.M. and are grateful for it. 'Britain', said Joe, 'represented 50 per cent of the income to Universal'.

"WELL (*Cinema's* caps) it must be the first time in history of films that a British company has achieved that relative importance to the American market. Great work! 'C.M. is doing a marvellous job', said Seidelman.—Just quietly and gratefully!"

Mr. Seidelman should be quiet and grateful but what reason the British film industry or its trade papers have got for congratulating either Joe or C.M. it is difficult to see. We know we lost our film industry in the last war and that we stand a good chance of doing it again. But why cheer about it. Incidentally, Mr. C. M. Woolf is also chairman of the British Film Producers' Association. Nice work if you can get it!

A very different reception to that given our "Joe" was *Today's Cinema's* of the British Ministry of Information's roneo "*Suggestions for Feature Producers*". It was just a roneod pamphlet with not unreasonable suggestions for feature producers to follow if they wanted any co-operation from the M.O.I. It said that the Ministry would "support all types of pictures including purely dramatic or comedy kind provided these were of the highest quality and neither maudlin, morbid, nor purely nostalgic for the old ways and days". It went on to say that "its special support would be given to realistic films dealing with events not directly about the war, but featuring events in factories, factory hostels, workshops, mines and on the land, and to other serious films dealing with historical and dramatic themes, provided they showed the positive value of British national characteristics and the democratic way of life".

Surely this wasn't so unreasonable. It was practically the first official statement on what was considered good film propaganda and it was not a bad statement. But no! The *Cinema* which can say "good work" to an Englishman and an American who are shifting the boodle out to support the American industry, can only say of their own miserable M.O.I. "And now let us turn to the lighter side of Life. High up among the headlines dealing with the lighter side of life I should put this latest pronunciamento from the Ministry of Information.

"It is the funniest thing that has happened for years. Just savour this sentence quoting the Ministry's views, for the British Film Producers." *The Cinema* then quotes the paragraph we have quoted above, and ends up by saying, "It is high time this government department recognised that entertainment is an art. Matters of art are best left to artists who have studied them".

The only bright spot in the grimy story was the *Cinema's* issue two days later. The M.O.I. had apparently opened one eye and looked at them, and there were seven humble paragraphs of apology.

Rumour

PRACTICALLY everyone in the country has heard the story by now of the American soldier going into a pub and saying to the barmaid, "Give me a glass of bitter—and give it to me quicker than you ran at Dunkirk." Practically everyone will have heard which pub it happened in, who was there at the time and so on. If you think back a year or so you may remember another rumour. Haw-haw said that the clock in such and such a barrack room was three and a half minutes fast, and that he knew all about it. Two days later when the clock had been put right Haw-haw had said, "We notice your clock was put right this morning". At the time an investigation proved that nothing even vaguely similar had been said over the German wireless. It was all just a rumour. It had whipped round the country at incredible speed and had been told of nearly every public clock in the country. The story of the American soldier is just the same. To one pub in London five distinct versions of this story came in one week. One from Bristol, one from Cambridge, one from Nottingham, one from Glasgow, and one from Piccadilly. Each one about a definite named pub.

Rumour used like this seems to be one of the cheapest and quickest forms of propaganda there is. There are stories of German agents dressing as Americans, and going into pubs, but it doesn't seem really necessary. All they have got to do is to tell the story to someone. We do the rest. Considering the importance of good feelings between British and Americans, it might be a good idea to make first some film about the real Americans and what they are like. And secondly, a good rumour film. Not dreary melodrama, but a good straightforward analysis of rumours, using the ones that nearly all people will remember and tracing them back to their invisible sources. Not trying to shock or browbeat the audience, but just simple explanation.

(*Continued on page* 114)

SECOND FRONT FOR PROPAGANDA

THE M.O.I. Films Division has changed its production and distribution policy for propaganda films. The Five Minute film is to be abolished and a monthly film lasting 15 minutes is to be substituted, with free distribution to all cinemas. In addition there are to be twelve two-reelers a year, sold in the open market, and a certain number of "specials"—possibly up to feature length—also for straight commercial showing.

The pros and cons of this change are discussed elsewhere. But a further question remains. Is there going to be a change of heart as well as a change of machinery?

It is easy for Ministry officials and film makers alike to be too satisfied with a mere flow of so-called propaganda films and with the knowledge that they are being widely shown. Everyone is working hard, and under difficult conditions. Everyone tends to look at the trees and to fail to see the wood.

Once again it is time rigorously to question the value of our propaganda services. In our last issue we referred to the lamentable debate on propaganda in the House of Commons; and to-day the impression of failure and stultification is becoming more and more intensified. Britain has built up a huge propaganda machine and is failing to use it to good effect.

Look at the situation objectively. The war has reached its greatest crisis. Whatever the day to day victories or reverses may be, the basic situation is one of imminent peril and extreme difficulty. Shipping and supplies, quality and quantity of armaments, man-power and woman-power, military tactics and strategy—in all these spheres we find danger and dissatisfaction.

Basic Morale

Victories and defeats are reflected by day-to-day morale. But what of basic morale—the morale which can increase or stifle the all-out effort of the nation? And what of the need to bind together the efforts of the people of the United Nations, to increase their understanding of each other's problems? What is being done about it?

Propaganda is not just a method of making friends and influencing people. Propaganda, as the Jesuits well knew, is concerned with faith, and if it has no faith it is a waste of effort.

In Britain our propaganda began by working from the belief that we were winning. After Dunkirk it switched to the belief that we should win provided we tried. To-day it is doing little more than run around in small circles trying to equate platitudes with certain inescapable facts which involve clear thinking, unconventional action, and a burning faith,

Make no mistake about it. No propagandist can ply his trade if this freedom of faith is denied to him. And where is that freedom to-day?

Poppycock, say the cynics (i.e. people afraid to face up to issues), we are fighting a war between good and evil and that's faith enough for the common folk. The good United Nations against the evil Axis—that's enough to impel an all-out effort.

Basically it might be, if fighting against **was all that's needed. But what about fighting** for? **People all over the world have been led up the garden path of war too often now to have a real belief that the end of a conflict means millenium. They look to a post-war world representing their own simple specifications, even if they don't attach high falutin' ideological phrases to them. They look at Russia, and observe a faith which removes mountains, and when they think about Russia, it occurs to them that this faith is not that blind patriotism into which the old-guard so glibly rationalise their admiration of Soviet effort, but rather the fact that the people of Russia are fighting for a world which is theirs and which they themselves have built.**

It's not much of an exaggeration to say that the only people in Britain fighting in similar terms are a comparatively small group whose world, if the war is to be won, must vanish unregretted. Conversely, the people of Britain and America and China have to fight for a world which they have *not yet* built, and they seek, at least, confirmation that there will be a chance to build it.

It is by now well known that the reason why the M.O.I. has had, at best, a limited success is simply that the Government has no desire for the active propaganda which is the only solution to this and other paradoxical problems.

Propaganda without confirmative action is negative and must end in collapse. Goebbels is beginning to find this out. Sooner or later—to-day almost certainly sooner—the pronouncements of the propagandists must be proved by action and result to be true. Truth in propaganda means nothing more nor less—a fact which the House of Commons speakers egregiously forget. But to-day most of our propaganda is hot air.

Backed by Action

To take a possible example. Films and radio can plug the idea of total effort and equality of sacrifice till they are black in the face. They can take concrete examples—rationing in various fields, communal restaurants and what not. But what earthly use is it unless it is backed up by action? The removal of the basic petrol ration is a fact. The institution of compulsory communal restaurants for all alike would be another fact. Two facts, two bricks to shore up the hitherto shaky foundations of our propaganda system.

We sympathise with the officials at the M.O.I. and the B.B.C. They have no direct instructions on policy, nor have they permission to institute a policy of their own. They are fighting in a fog.

But if they believe in this world revolution which is so bloodily being fought on a scale never before imagined, they've got to get out of the fog. They've got to smash the petty-mindedness, the timorousness, and the reactionary stupidities which stand in their way as much as in the way of everyone else. They must even risk losing their jobs—a thing which revolutionaries have sometimes been known to do.

They must insist on a policy which is positive and categorical, a policy which says in detail **what hitherto has been oh so carefully expressed in cloudy phrases and political catchwords. And they must insist, above all, on complete freedom to interpret this policy once it has been laid down.**

All this may sound like an unnecessary repetition of the A B C. Do not forget that in Britain to-day the A B C of propaganda, of total effort, of true democracy, still remains painfully to be learnt. Nor will it be learnt from our present teachers, but from men and women with a belief and bravery far beyond the tired old ushers who even yet are getting their palsied thumbs stuck in the machinery.

WHAT CAN FILMS DO?

IT can easily be seen that the success of the new M.O.I. films policy will depend not merely on first-class technique, important enough though this will be, but also, and especially, on their choice of subject matter and the way they treat it.

First and foremost these films must be identified with the will of the people.

Secondly they must be tough and uncompromising.

Thirdly they must be international rather than parochial; informational rather than hortatory.

These three needs are based on the fact that a full realisation of our peril in active rather than fearful terms is still lacking, and that total effort has not yet, but must immediately be achieved.

The coming winter will be one of hardship for the civilian population. It's not enough to ask them to grin and bear it. You have to explain why, and do so in such forthright terms that your film is also impelling greater activity, even under conditions of very real discomfort. But even here the best possible film will be at a loss if the facts of the case do not bear it out. If there is less food, less coal and less transport it will be essential for the public *to see for itself* that, for instance, higher income levels do not, as at present, have an unfair advantage over lower income levels. Your film must be based on fact, and this is a problem which the M.O.I. must most seriously face, since it represents one of the greatest difficulties if *active* films are to be made.

Similarly the M.O.I. will no doubt (and quite correctly) wish to relate the present need for total effort to the constructive future for which the peoples of the world are fighting. This again cannot convincingly be done save in definite relation to the present.

And remember that people need a lot of convincing on these points when they read speeches in the House saying that we should not try to stir up revolutionary activity in occupied Europe, or when they see notices on bombed areas in which private building interests call for offers for new clients, or when they hear of a commission being set up to consider the future of public schools instead of the future possibilities of the boarding school system as a whole.

In these columns we have stressed over and over again the necessity for the Cabinet to commit itself to a definite policy of propaganda, which of course involves the question of total effort (which in turn postulates total equality). That policy must be boldly stated; and it must be a policy which will stand up to the practical appraisal of the ordinary citizen—not the 1922 Committee or the fogeys of Transport House.

Without such a policy it would be wise for the M.O.I. to confine most of its work to the instructional films at which it excels.

We do not propose to attack the Films Division for past sins of omission or commission. Its officers, equally with film-makers and radio-producers, have been working for three long years under impossible conditions.

But we suggest that more fight must be shown, so that the existing machinery can be geared to a definite instead of an indefinite purpose.

The time has come for the M.O.I. people to have the guts to present an either-or to their Minister, and through him to the Government. Either establish a policy, or admit you are not interested in revolutionary propaganda, which is the only propaganda which can express and give a lead to the ideas and wishes of the people.

Otherwise, the new production plans will represent a change of method only. They should essentially represent a change of heart.

FILM OF THE MONTH

Mrs. Miniver

Delight of the upper middle classes, delight of that 4 per cent of the population whose incomes ranks higher than £2,000 per annum, was the occasional column in "The Times" headed "Mrs. Miniver". Its cosy charm, elegantly transmitted, in a less bitter style than Miss E. M. Delafield, had an irresistible appeal for that class that looked back with such infinite regret to the spacious Edwardian days. While the life it purported to portray had a winsome, near-aristocratic flavour, its heyday was during 'appeasement', and while the writer was so obviously a part of that life, its constant danger was its tendency to be not so much a participant's story but a rather flushed outsider's appreciation of a stratum of society. Our correspondent's review suggests that this effect was realised in Mrs. Miniver's translation to the harsher lights of the screen.

Mrs. Miniver is not one of the easiest films to review because in some ways it is very good and in a lot of others it is just repulsive. You can sit in the Empire and hear practically the whole house weeping—a British audience with three years of war behind it, crying at one of the phoniest war films that has ever been made. So you can tell it is well made—superlatively well made. It is hard to be unkind to *Mrs. Miniver* because William Wyler is such a good director, but the film is so untrue that it has got to be done.

On Mrs. Miniver, her husband and three children William Wyler has lavished all the qualities that make people likeable. The Minivers are a comfortably-off professional family. They have a big house with a river frontage—landing stage and motor-boat; a £400 Lagonda and a son at Oxford. They live in a world which seems to consist of giggling housemaids with their bucolic young men; doddering, servile stationmasters; glee singers in their feather boas; duchesses and their granddaughters, blackmailing, comic grocers and truculent ever-leaving cooks.

Gross Misinterpretation

The film has already been described by a leading British critic as "the best film on English war-time life". The film was, I suppose, well-intentioned in its praise of the people of Britain and their ability to 'take it'. But though I fear many of the less worthy will accept the film as congratulation many more will be disgusted by its gross misinterpretation of character and types.

These pseudo-comic characters are no strangers to the British stage or indeed to the British film. And if the film had made a less strenuous attempt to be realistic one could have accepted them for their entertainment value. But the film sets out to tell a true story of blitzed England and comes too close to a historical record to treat it thus lightly. We, therefore, take grave exception to the view that the Minivers were and are the backbone of Britain. The subject of the film is important and the excellence of the film is important, so the impact on audiences of this Hollywood idea of Britain's behaviour in war-time is of some moment. The Minivers or people like them, were there under the bombing (though the little Minivers were assuredly tucked away in a safe area and quite rightly too) but the Minivers were in the minority. The cooks and housemaids, grocers and stationmasters, bargees and tugmen were certainly there in the middle of it and overwhelmingly in the majority.

Why does Wyler fail?

In *The Little Foxes* Wyler made the negroes into dignified sensible people. They were the people who grew the cotton, spun the cloth, grew the food, looked after the white people's children, sang songs and lived true and well, while around them their masters bickered over pennies and mistresses killed masters for a few musty deeds in a tin box. Why, when he comes to an all-white story does Wyler fail? Surely he cannot believe that the four hundred thousand men Mr. Miniver goes to rescue from the beaches are the morons that he shows in the rest of the film. I can well believe that the story and conception of the people are Jan Struther's but surely Mr. Wyler who, with all his skill can turn a family of drones into good human people can surely clean up a script or else in the actual direction make the forty-seven odd million people in Britain just a little more realistic.

It is an awkward case to argue. One attitude of mind presents the working classes as a grand, flawless people and the middle class as mean, vicious and effete. The other presents the working classes as stupid dolts and the middle classes as nice kind benefactors of mankind. Must we blame Wyler because he was misinformed?

It is a pity that so much ability has been misused by an allied country in presenting Britain so badly. It might be a good idea if the Ministry of Information had someone in Hollywood to act as adviser on films about Britain and also to keep a check on our nationals who go overseas and write stories of the Miniver type.

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New Documentary Films

Front Line Camera. *Production:* Army Film Unit.
This is a film with appeal to the general public. It is lucky enough to have the right subject—the war as it is being fought in England; the right commentator—Ed. Murrow, and it may also have had unique facilities in its shooting, since the Army Film Unit is responsible. With these advantages it has a good start, but it is also well made.

The Front Line is the South Coast and we are shown a bit of the real fighting with German bombers that is going on, and a good deal of manœuvres and preparations for the offensive. The film indicates that the Front Line is passing out of its state of defence and adopting the aggressive attitude. The commentary carries the aggressive and cheerful note throughout and whatever may have been omitted in the showing or the telling, the film has a tonic effect and will do much to improve morale.

Essential Jobs. *Production:* Paul Rotha. *Director:* John Page. *Story:* V. S. Pritchett. *Camera:* Stanley Rodwell. *Recording:* Leo Wilkins. *Editing:* Sylvia Cummings.
The purpose of this film appears to be the consolation of those who work in seemingly unessential jobs. In the style of "The Old Woman and Her Pig" fairy-tale, it begins with a man who has the humble job of making small wire nails. His workmate jeers at him. But it appears that these wire nails are going to be very important in the end. In the next stage the nails appear in the hands of two "browned off" factory girls who use them in the job of packing cocoa—admittedly an extremely tedious job. This cocoa is also highly important for it is to cheer and warm the lorry driver in an all-night café, a fact that may seem insignificant. But no, the lorry driver is carrying boxes of soap to a factory where leather is being dressed and the workers need it to ward off anthrax. Just as all the other workers are either grousing or being groused at, the leather worker is complaining bitterly because his wife has no respect for his job. The next link in the chain is a factory where girls are using the leather to make gloves which they complain are "fit for duchesses". They get together on this complaint and decide to stop work. This is the signal for the rounding off of the film. The man in charge of the shop addresses the girls, explaining the vital importance of the gloves, for they are to warm the hands of the girls on the aircraft defences. He takes the opportunity of moralising on the relative importance of war jobs and generally telling the girls off for their behaviour.

This film is competently made and has probably a value for the more simple-minded, but it tends to a schoolmasterly attitude and suffers a good deal from lack of humour.

They Speak for Themselves. *Production:* Seven League. *Made by;* H. M. Neiter, Paul Rotha, Miles Malleson, Rex Warner. One-reeler, M.O.I. non-theatrical.
In this a number of young people air their views on war and the future of Britain. It is snappily cut, is never allowed to become tedious, and its technique offers a more or less fresh avenue for future films of discussion. The picture content is confined to the group of speakers, and the direction had been sufficiently good to overcome this limitation.

The young people's vocal offerings seem a little over-practised and they present nothing very new. However they do give one the impression of being a thinking, enquiring section of the community and full of a sense of responsibility for the future of their country.

Twelve Days. *Production:* M.O.I. for M.O.F. *Story:* Mary Benedetta. *Camera:* A. T. Dinsdale. *Recording:* Charles Tasto. *Editor:* Catherine Millar. *Director:* Cecil Musk.
This is an account of the distribution of meat under war conditions. A farmer finds that he has not sufficient feed for his sheep and decides to sell some of them. He discovers that he must give notice of his intention to the Ministry of Food twelve days in advance of market day. The film devotes itself to showing the organisation that goes on in these twelve days. It is an account of the meat rationing system and though not conspicuously entertaining, the story is well told, taking into consideration the highly complicated organisation that has to be clarified.

They Keep the Wheels Turning. G.B. Screen Services. *Direction:* Francis A. Searle. *Camera:* Walter Harvey. *Recording:* John Douglas. *Editing:* Enid Mansell.
A film about the labour shortage in the motor industry. The solution is the bringing of women to work in the machine shops. A competent, pedestrian job of work with no high lights.

The United Nations. Crown Film Unit.
The Crown Film Unit has done a good job on this from the points of view of finish, timing, music and colour. If you are susceptible to pageantry you may even cry with emotion. It should give the newsreel boys something to think about, or could they do it a lot better if they had the time, the money and the equipment?

Air Force Newsreel Material
During the past month, the Air Force through the M.O.I. presented the newsreel companies with thirteen hundred feet of film shot over France and Germany. The newsreels at first rejected it but were finally persuaded to use it. In the end all the reels came out with nothing else in them but the despised scoop.

The point at issue was not the quality of the material, for that was beyond reproach, but the fear in the minds of the newsreel companies that their job might in the end be done by service units. The Service attitude to the newsreel companies' coverage of material of this kind is that there are too many difficulties involved in letting civilian cameramen fly on operational flights. In fact, even now, the Air Force cameramen are ordinary working members of an air crew with a specified job apart from handling a camera.

This thirteen hundred feet of material is much superior to anything yet turned out by Germany.

Actually the newsreels have not presented it very well. They did not, for example, build up the crossing of the French coast and there was no explanation of the night bombing to tell audiences that the pin points of light were in fact large scale fires and not just bad black-out. At all events, hats off to the R.A.F. Film Unit. They have certainly presented a good argument for the Air Force shooting its own material.

Notes of the Month

(Continued)

Celluloid Front

HOLLYWOOD was willing and eager to help. In the long pre-war days the world's biggest cinema industry piddled around making training films for the armed forces, an occasional hammy patriotic picture of its own, tried its hand at box-office propaganda and got smeared by U.S. Senate isolationists for its pains. After Pearl Harbour, Hollywood pleaded with Franklin Roosevelt's Government Films Co-ordinator, white-haired, volcanically patient Lowell Mellett, for an important assignment.

Last week, four months later, Hollywood at last got its marching orders. They called for little more than a short hike. For Government account, the industry will make 26 shorts on war subjects provided by Mellett. Having set a man to do a boy's work, Mellett returned to Washington.

Just over the border the Canadian National Film Board, with no Hollywood to call on, is shooting more than 100 pictures a year. Its full-time executive head, voluble John Grierson, who prepared England's slick Government film set-up, was busy visualising the war for Canadian citizens.

For its own celluloid front, the U.S. still has no pattern except that which Mellett will provide when he gets around to it. Hollywood's and the Government's few war documentaries have been a hodge-podge of patriotic appeals, expositions on tank construction, sugar-coated shots of training troops, etc. These films have failed to keep the U.S. public informed on the progress of the war, to tell it why tyres have to be rationed, to relate the vast complexity of global war to the individual citizen's job, etc.

Who's Baby?

The new production and distribution policy of the M.O.I. for propaganda in public cinemas has come into being without much criticism. Yet a very serious change has been brought about—the five-minute film has been dropped and a monthly fifteen minute film substituted. It appears from what statements have been made that this was almost wholly brought about at the wish of the exhibitors. They claimed that a weekly five-minute film was too difficult to fit into their programmes. They could not drop their advertising films, their slide advertisements for local traders, their organ interludes. However without a battle the M.O.I. lets them drop five to seven minutes of Government information. There is plenty of evidence that the public liked the five-minute film and the production quality was constantly improving. It would be interesting to know if, when the C.E.A. dictated the new form that government propaganda was to take, whether they made any guarantee that their members would show the monthly fifteen-minuter more loyally than they showed the five minuter. It would also be interesting to know whether anyone has worked out the number of times a member of the public is likely to see one of these longer films. Is the regular twice or three times-a-weeker liable to see the same film perhaps six times or more? Once again, that Jekyll and Hyde, the Films Division of the M.O.I., has thrown aside the bristling mane-like robe of a lion and disclosed a wee, wee mouse.

No. 5

RFU

THE GARDENER AND THE BABOON

THERE was once a Gardener, who loved gardening to that degree that he wholly absented himself from the company of men, to the end he might give himself up entirely to the care of his flowers and plants. He had neither wife nor children; and from morning till night he did nothing but work in his garden, so that it lay like a terrestrial paradise. At length, however, the good man grew weary of being alone, and took a resolution to leave his garden in search of good company.

As he was soon after, walking at the foot of a mountain, he spied a baboon, whose looks had in them nothing of a savage fierceness natural to that animal, but were mild and gentle. This baboon was also weary of being alone and came down from the mountain for no other reason but to see whether he could meet with anyone that would join society with him. So soon, therefore, as these two saw each other, they began to have a friendship one for another; and the Gardener first accosted the baboon, who, in return, made him a profound reverence. After some compliments had passed between them, the Gardener made the baboon a sign to follow him, and bringing him into his garden, regaled him with a world of very delicious fruit, which he had carefully preserved; so that at length they entered into a very strict friendship together; insomuch that when the Gardener was weary of working, and lay down to take a little nap, the baboon, out of affection, stayed all the while by him, and kept off the flies from his face. One day as the Gardener lay down to sleep at the foot of a tree, and the baboon stood by, according to his custom, to drive away the flies, it happened that one of those insects did light upon the Gardener's mouth, and still as the baboon drove it away from one side, it would light on the other; which put the baboon into such a passion that he took up a great stone to kill it. It is true he did kill the fly; but at the same time he broke out two or three of the Gardener's teeth. From whence men of judgment observe that you have to know the tune as well as the words.

REALIST FILM UNIT

47 OXFORD STREET, W.1

Telephone: GERRARD 1958

SCIENTIFIC FILMS IN BRITAIN

By FOUR-WAY

CIVIL DEFENCE artists parade in the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. Political and war training pamphlets monopolise the bookstalls. Aesthetics is being shown the door. Art for art's sake takes one nowhere if one is stalking a U.X.B. or getting ready for a second front. But æsthetics is still strong, still kicking, even though its kicks may be the kicks of its death throes. The war kids too many people into believing that our intellectual junk shops have been bombed every time the shutters are put up temporarily.

In films, at any rate the æsthetic approach is being eaten up by the practical "What can I learn from this?" approach. The series, *Canada Carries On*, and *Fire Guard*, to quote two widely differing examples, make this plain. Not that the change is a new one. In Britain it dates at least from *Drifters* and from the time when the British gas industry decided to base its film programmes on sociology rather than on beauty or sales talk. But the war has speeded up the change enormously. It has rearranged the values of movie making by evolving a new set of box-office criteria. "Is it true?" is beginning to take the place of "Is it entertainment?" Which means that this is one of the periods of history when public taste is in advance of public leadership—one of the periods when the leaders may be asked to give account of their stewardship.

This change in public taste and public values is shown significantly in the growth of the scientific film movement, which has taken place almost wholly within the war period and has overtaken, in a matter of two years, ten years of stately motion of what may be called the cultural film society movement.

The origins of the earlier cultural type of film society, and the scientific film society are a study in comparative sociology. The former was started in 1925 by a group of people particularly interested in the art and technique of making films. Through these early film societies Russian and German classics were screened. The names of Eisenstein and Lubitsch began to come into the same sentences as Aldous Huxley and Virginia Woolfe. The cultural film society movement helped to turn the film from the popular mythology it had been till 1925 into an "art" and an "industry". (Compare *Shoulder Arms* with *The Dictator*.) In short, the cultural film society movement, by creating standards of criticism, helped to make the film industry respectable. But the cultural film society movement was—and is—primarily interested in films as films; it has usually avoided the consideration of films as a social force, though the progressive Edinburgh Film Guild is arranging programmes designed to explain the outlook, cultural and economic life of various countries.

The Scientific Film Society movement was started in 1937 by the Association of Scientific Workers. In that year the Association set up a Scientific Films Committee (a Film Study Group had been active since 1936) "to further the interests of the scientific film, co-ordinating and improving on what is already being done . . .".

The Association of Scientific Workers had, of course, no interest in films as such, but it held that its function as a trade union representing working scientists could not be fully developed until there was better public understanding of the work of scientists and of the scientific method. The scientific film was one obvious weapon to achieve this purpose.

In detail, the Scientific Films Committee was charged "to make . . . a complete file of information concerning (*a*) scientific films available graded according to merit; (*b*) projection equipment available . . ." It was to maintain a panel of scientific advisers to aid film producers, and a panel of film producers to aid scientists. It was to issue certificates of merit to suitable films, to produce films and to arrange shows of films "on a national scale".

Of these various duties, only the first—the compilation of graded lists of films, and the last—the arranging of film shows on a national scale, have been fully developed.

The Scientific Films Committee set up panels of film viewers and began to go through all the available scientific films, assessing them for accuracy of subject matter, clarity of exposition, and suitability for various types of audience. The conclusions of the viewing panels are published from time to time.

In 1938, the Scientific Films Committee was responsible for starting the London Scientific Film Society—the first of its kind, and now running independently of the Association of Scientific Workers. In the same year the A.S.W. arranged a series of important scientific film shows in Cambridge, and in 1939 Nan Clow started the Scientific Film Club of Aberdeen.

Today there are no less than seven flourishing scientific film societies in Scotland alone—at Aberdeen, Ardrossan, Ayr, Dalmellington, Glasgow, Kilmarnock, and Prestwick—all save the first started since the war. In England, with the exception of the London Scientific Film Society (which survived the blitz with difficulty but is now flourishing) there were, till recently, no organised societies, though local A.S.W. committees arranged no less than fifty-one shows in the eight months ending May 1942. There are now signs that England will follow the lead of Scotland and set up formally constituted film societies. (Sporadic shows—however successful—cannot hope to become growing points of public interest.)

At first there were some differences of opinion between those who thought that the A.S.W. should support only "films of pure science", and those who thought it should support also films illustrating the relations between science and society; between those who thought the Scientific Films Committee should represent mainly *scientists* who wished to see films, and those who considered the Committee's principal duty to be the interpretation of science to the *public* through the medium of films. These difficulties were, however, academic and disappeared as soon as the Committee proved its usefulness by undertaking both types of duty, and by arranging to book complete programmes of scientific films for anyone who required them, compiling each programme according to the tastes of the audience to be catered for.

In April, 1941, the Scientific Films Committee published a Memorandum* distinguishing between the film of instruction and the film of interpretation, urging the need for the wide and organised distribution of scientific films and drawing attention to serious gaps in the subjects covered by existing films. (Scottish teachers, through the Scottish Educational Film Association, had already drawn up a list of subjects on which films were urgently needed.)

By early 1942, the Scientific Film movement had developed to such an extent that it was possible to hold a National Scientific Film Conference. The tone of the conference was set by the notice convening the London Session, part of which read:

> "If we are to avoid disastrous mistakes in social planning, both during and after the war, it is vitally necessary that there should be a widespread understanding of the scientific method. The creative potentialities of science need to be brought vividly into the consciousness of every citizen. . . . Enormous potential audiences are ready, in the factories, in Civil Defence, and in the Armed Forces. . . . The general purpose of this Conference is to see that the films are brought to the audiences."

There were two sessions, the first at Ayr on Saturday and Sunday, August 1st and 2nd, the second in London on August 16th. Arthur Elton took the chair during the afternoon meetings at each session.

At the Ayr session, 33 delegates attended, representing 27 organisations including the 7 Scottish Film Societies and such organisations as the Glasgow Corporation, G-B. Instructional, the Educational Institute of Scotland, together with two delegates representing London interests and delegates from Nottingham (Boots' Cine Club), Birmingham, and other English towns. The Saturday morning meeting was taken up with reports from the Scottish Film Societies and the passing of resolutions, subsequently endorsed by the London session, and discussed below. The afternoon meeting was opened by the chairman, who pointed out that just as the Cultural Film Society had had a profound effect on the film by creating critical standards, so could the Scientific Film Society movement have an equally profound influence. To win this war efficiently, economically and equitably, it was necessary that we should become a nation of scientists. Not highbrows immersed in technique, but citizens with minds orientated methodically to environment.† Seven other speakers discussed practical problems of setting up societies, choosing programmes, and film appreciation.

On the Saturday evening there was an exhibition of amateur scientific films, one on Blood Transfusion, one to recruit women into industry, and one on a deficiency disease in sheep. The makers of these films were primarily interested in conveying a useful message. From this it followed that each film was of greater than local importance, for each could be used (and in two cases was already being used) in the Scottish libraries as a direct part of the war effort. For as soon as the amateur gives up competing with the professional in terms of film technique, camera movement or acting, and begins to compete with him in terms of clarity of exposition or intrinsic social importance of subject matter, the amateur is on level terms with the professional, or even at an advantage over him. In fact, the amateur ceased to be an amateur; he becomes professional.

*See D.N.L., Vol. iii, No. 4, page 61.
†See D.N.L., Vol. iii, No. 7, page 101.

(*Continued overleaf*)

The London session was attended by 105 people, representing 28 organisations, the Press, members of the general public, Scientific Film Societies and others. The session endorsed the resolutions passed in Scotland which, with new resolutions, have become the national policy of the Scientific Film movement. The main decisions of the meeting may be summarised as follows:

(1) There shall be an English Scientific Film Association similar to the Scottish Scientific Film Association already set up. The two Associations shall be financially independent of each other, self-governing and local in character. The Associations will be primarily concerned with the domestic detail of viewing films, arranging programmes and instigating film shows and Film Societies.

(2) Both Associations shall be embraced in a National Scientific Film Federation, which shall be a central authority devoted to national planning and execution.

(3) The Associations and the Federation are to call on all bodies making or commissioning films, inviting them to encourage and finance the production of scientific films.

(4) Education and welfare officers, the Services, Civil Defence Service units, including the Home Guard, and factory managements and trade unions, shall be urged to use the scientific film for educational purposes.

(5) The Kinematograph Renters Association and the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association were urged to increase the number of scientific films in the public programmes.

Such were the decisions and recommendations of the first National Conference. From this, it is hoped, will spring a national scientific film movement, geared to the war effort. Clearly, the Federation has within it the possibility of something very important after the war, but the speakers, evidently believing that it is easy to think so much about what will come after the war that the conduct of the war itself is forgotten, only called attention to this point in passing. The meeting had not time to consider in detail relationships with other countries, but it was hoped that, even in war, there will be a free exchange of scientific films. Not only can such an exchange of films serve a short-term purpose in war education, but each film will carry something of the spirit of the country which made it, and will help each country to understand the economics, outlook and culture of its neighbours.

5-MINUTE FILMS
FOR APRIL-JULY, 1942

Title	*Theme*	*Director*	*Prod. Unit*	*Release Date*
FILLING THE GAP[1] ..	Dig for Victory	—	Realist & Halas-Batchelor	6/4
THE OWNER GOES ALOFT	National Savings	Ivan Scott	Spectator	13/4
THE MIDDLE EAST ..	The strategy of the Middle East	G. Tharp	S.F.U.	20/4
BALLOON SITE 568 ..	W.A.A.F.s at work	I. Moffatt	Strand	27/4
MEN OF INDIA[2]	India's industrial effort	Ezra Mir	Indian F.U.	4/5
GO TO BLAZES	Dealing with an incendiary bomb	Walter Forde ..	Ealing	11/5
FREE FRENCH NAVY ..	French naval units at sea	R. Carruthers ..	Spectator	18/5
THE FIVE MEN OF VELISH[3]	Nazis in Russia	—	Soviet War News Film Agency	25/5
PARTNERS IN CRIME ..	The Black Market	Launder & Gilliat ..	Gainsborough	1/6
WORK PARTY	The factory effort	Len Lye	Realist	8/6
DOWN OUR STREET ..	National Savings	T. Bishop	Merton Park	15/6
WOOD FOR WAR	Canadian soldiers and lumbermen in Britain	—	Canadian Army F.U. ..	22/6
THE RIGHT MAN	Occupational selection in the Army	—	Army F.U.	29/6
START A LAND CLUB ..	The agricultural effort	A. Buchanan ..	Films of G.B.	6/7
NEW TOWNS FOR OLD ..	Plans for the future	J. Eldridge	Strand	13/7
TROOPSHIP	The Army en route for the Front	—	Army F.U.	20/7
DOCKERS	The industrial effort	F. Sainsbury ..	Realist	27/7

(1) *Cartoon.* (2) *Re-edited in Britain.* (3) *Library compilation.*

Newsreels Lack Flavour of War

THE news reels continue to be dull and unimaginative with only an occasional break in the fog which appears to cover most physical manifestations of the world at war. It is alarming to consider to what extent the war has become for British people a battle of words—literary rather than physical. How few are the opportunities either in the press or in the cinema to see what war looks like. From Russia and from Germany has come something of the true flavour, but British and American films rely either on the lath-and-plaster fictions of the studios or upon conventional and stagey news-items not fundamentally dissimilar from those of peace-time.

Frontline Episode

It is true that from time to time a courageous cameraman will send back scenes of a convoy battle (the recent Malta convoy was an outstanding example) and occasionally a correspondent will convey the immediacy and emotion of a frontline episode. (Genock and Rose of Paramount have given us graphic war pictures and moving commentaries to go with them.) Apart from these purple passages we find only manœuvres and inspections with a little sport or comedy for relief.

It may, of course, be argued that what we lack is a war-front adequately exciting for the purposes of the camera. In support of this case it must be admitted that the Libya coverage and the recent scenes in Egypt have shown almost everything that could be revealed by the camera. Yet the lack of fighting to photograph is not a complete reason for the present newsreel deficiency.

It is not only on the battlefield that war has a physical and photographable existence. Total war is something which influences the whole life of a people.

Workers of Britain

Imaginative newsreel treatment would succeed in conveying to the screen the facts of war by the presentation of episodes which are to be found at the very doors of the newsreel offices. There is no need to go to the front to photograph a war of the people. Let us see the citizens and workers of Britain in their homes and at their benches and see what they are like and what they are doing. Let us have personal anecdotes of the contribution of individual men and women and children to the total power of a nation at war. Let us pick individuals out from the crowd and tell their stories briefly with skill and imagination. These cameos will—as examples—have a strong propaganda value. They will also possess that quality of humanity which the newsreels have always most lacked; the quality which because it is lacking now, prevents the newsreels from showing us Britain at war. From the beginning of their history the newsreels have never been deeply and intimately interested in people. Until this is changed they will never give us the realism which should be their principal characteristic.

RADIO

Work of the Feature Department

The B.B.C. gets kicked about a good deal for the programmes it puts out, day in and day out, year in year out—and who are we to say the kicks aren't, in general, well deserved? But by casting around the wastelands of the *Radio Times* you can occasionally pick up the scent of something important, and more often than not it will be a production by the Feature Department.

B.B.C. features correspond in part to documentary films. They are concerned with both long and short term propaganda as well as with attempts to keep the small pennant of "culture" flying among the forests of banners proclaiming the joys of Vera Lynn, cinema organists and what not.

The Feature Department is in charge of Laurence Gilliam, a B.B.C. old-timer who has never lost his integrity. Under him works a team of producers including Louis MacNeice, Stephen Potter, D. G. Bridson, John Glyn Jones, Walter Rilla, Robert Barr and Maurice Brown. Technically these people are not afraid to experiment. Ideologically they are putting out material which, a few years ago, the directorate at Broadcasting House would almost certainly have frowned on.

Worth-while Programmes

People interested in the documentary technique might do worse than make a comparative study of the work of the Feature people. Here are a few programmes to look out for:

Marching On (every Thursday at 9.40). Produced by John Glyn Jones and Robert Barr. This is a thirty minute programme with a lot of guts. It takes the latest news and dramatises it—often putting it in a new perspective. Often concentrates on events which owing to paper shortage get crowded out of the dailies. Cracks jokes—often neat and political. Chief fault: tendency to over-sentimentalise things. Chief merit: by means of amazingly good teamwork, manages to put across spot-news in a constructive instead of scatty manner.

Contemporary Portraits. Produced usually by Stephen Potter. Dramatised biographies of living people, for instance Lord Nuffield, Fay Compton and Low. Variable in quality (perhaps according to subject). Perhaps a few portraits of ordinary folk without fame or notoriety would pep this series up.

New Judgments. Writers of to-day re-value writers of the past, often with dramatic reconstructions. Plums so far have been V. I. S. Pritchett on Defoe, James Bridie on Barrie, and Elizabeth Bowen on Jane Austen.

Black Gallery (usually produced by Walter Rilla). A series of violent smacks at various Axis leaders. Variable—sometimes tough and vicious—sometimes puerile.

The "Salute" Series. Louis MacNeice's *Salute to the United Nations* was one of the most imaginative broadcasts ever. MacNeice productions are always worth an ear.

"Yes, Yes, Dr. Johnson, but . . ."

"A MAN," said Dr. Johnson, "is never more usefully employed than when earning money".

"But", as Grindon remarked, "there is another maxim fully as important, and founded on as great a principle, and that is, the INTERVALS of business must be attended to. No one can sharpen his intellectual faculties, or widen the range of his knowledge, without becoming more skilful and successful in the business or profession in which he is engaged".

So, for pleasure and profit, read, every week, the

Kinematograph WEEKLY

93 LONG ACRE : : LONDON : : W.C. 2

Film Society News

Scottish Churches Film Guild

Slowly, but surely, the Church of Scotland is becoming film conscious. True, war conditions have greatly hindered this development, but they have not arrested it. While the more outlying branches of the Scottish Churches Film Guild had to suspend their activities owing to most of the leaders being away on some form of service, in Glasgow and Edinburgh a good deal was done during last winter and spring to bring the religious film before people's notice. In Glasgow during a special Week of Witness, in which all the Protestant Churches took part, films were shown at Rallies held in various Picture Houses; others were used at district meetings of teachers held under the auspices of the Scottish Sunday School Union, and visits were paid to a military hospital and to canteens. The work of reviewing new films was maintained, and two classes of instruction in the use of the projector were held. In Edinburgh, nine reviewing meetings and five open displays were held. Interest was added to a number of these by having talks by experts on the more technical side of film production.

At the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, held in May, a committee appointed last year to advise on the use of films in the Church made its report. The committee strongly recommended that the Church should make every effort to utilise this modern medium of instruction and inspiration for its own purpose; and the Assembly appointed a permanent Committee whose business it will be to co-ordinate the work already being done by certain departments of the Church, to do everything in their power to encourage the production of films suitable for Church purposes, and to form a centre to which ministers might apply for guidance and help in organising film displays.

It was reported to the Assembly that under the auspices of the Edinburgh Presbytery an experiment had been made during the winter in holding Film Services in five of the Edinburgh churches. Some twenty such services were held in all, and the majority of them were said to have been thoroughly successful. Some of the films had proved disappointing.

It becomes increasingly clear that if we can only get the right kind of films there is a great future for film-work in the Church.

The Devon and Exeter Film Society hopes to continue activities. It has recently been in abeyance through disorganisation caused by enemy raids.

British Oxygen Co. Films

Members of scientific film societies will be interested to learn that the British Oxygen Co. Ltd. has issued a catalogue of their library of 16mm. educational films. These films have been employed as a supplement to the practical and theoretical lectures given in their instructional classes. They are available on loan, free of charge (except for return postage) to all bona-fide lecturers, institutions, schools, clubs, etc., and at least ten days' notice should be given by the borrower.

The address is: The Photographic (Publicity) Dept., The British Oxygen Co. Ltd., North Circular Road, Cricklewood, London, N.W.2.

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Washington plans wider use of film for Educational Purposes after war

Reprinted by kind permission of the "Motion Picture Herald."

By JOHN STUART, Jr.

WHEN the war is over the United States Department of State hopes to be in the motion pictures business in a major way.

Plans are maturing, it is learned in Washington, substantially to increase the motion picture activities of the Department's Division of Cultural Relations. For the present this increasing interest in the screen is to be confined to the non-theatrical motion picture.

The department charged with the administration of the country's foreign affairs is carrying on its current screen work through existing emergency and permanent government agencies with authorised film programmes. State Department appropriations for its own motion picture section are small in comparison with the screen budgets of other agencies. The current fund is said to be less than $50,000 a year.

But through the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Office of War Information, the film division founded by Colonel William Donovan (formerly Co-ordinator of Information) and other agencies the State Department is voicing an increasingly potent say on what kind of non-commercial, non-theatrical pictures shall be sent to other nations with Government blessing, or direct sponsorship.

Looking ahead to the day when peace comes, certain officers in the State Department foresee curtailment of the motion picture activities of these emergency agencies, and a slash in the huge film funds which many of them are now expending. They hope that much of this overseas screen exchange will revert to the State Department. It is possible that a permanent motion picture production and distribution machinery may be set up within the division of cultural relations, operating on a permanent budget.

The exchange of non-theatrical motion pictures with other nations would be undertaken by the department. All countries would be included, not just the Latin American republics, the United Nations and friendly neutrals. The objective would be the free display of pictures about the U.S. in other countries, and the exhibition here, through educational and other outlets, of pictures about the rest of the world.

Interchange of 16 mm.

"There would be a huge interchange of cultural, scientific and educational information *via* 16 mm. pictures specially produced or edited," one source close to the project explained. He discounted the "propaganda" aspects of such a programme, asserting that there is great curiosity about the United States, and its customs and traditions. The film programme would be merely an official attempt to fill this need, he said. It is envisioned as a potent force for good will and understanding.

The entertainment, and commercial motion pictures previously sent abroad have not been sufficiently specialised or accurate, it was said. The type of picture envisioned for cultural exchange would be 16 mm. scientific, educational and documentary reels presenting "in vivid and dramatic form" pictures of U.S. civilisation.

At present the Department of State, through the division of cultural relations, is working jointly with the Inter-American and War Information agencies. Their productions must be submitted to the State Department for review prior to export. Foreign missions of the State Department, through the cultural attachés now stationed in them, participate in the distribution of these pictures.

Suitability

A reviewing committee, representing the principal divisions within the department, is charged with looking at the pictures to determine their suitability for the countries for which they are destined. The department also will examine other commercial or educational non-theatrical pictures destined for free circulation abroad. If it approves them they may bear official U.S. sanction.

How this machinery works was described in *Motion Picture Herald* for October 11, 1941.

There have been reports of frequent friction, however, between other Government agencies and the State Department. The producing agencies have charged the State Department with delaying their programmes with red tape, and slow approval by the reviewing committee. Also, they have expressed off-the-record irritation at many of the changes in pictures or scripts which the State Department has asked before sanctioning their distribution through the cultural attachés.

To smooth this liaison the Division of Cultural Relations is now seeking to expand its film staff. Also, these new additions would be the nucleus of a post-war organisation.

Overseas

Technical consultants, film distribution experts and contact men who can handle overseas requests for special subjects are joining the staff. Their salaries, in several instances, will be paid out of the special Inter-American funds and they will be in direct liaison with the Rockefeller office.

Also, it is planned to assign film men to many of the principal American missions abroad. They will aid the cultural attachés in exhibiting the free American motion pictures and will obtain native pictures and suggest subjects for exhibition in the United States. The first of these assignments probably will be made in South America where already 30 of the 16 mm. projectors are in use, and 75 more are on order.

Currently the film programme of the State Department is in charge of John Begg, assistant chief of cultural relations. With a small staff, headed by Irene Wright, historian and for many years the supervisor of all the State Department film work, he has administered the exhibition of the Rockefeller office pictures and requests for State Department review of pictures destined for South America. He has a background of newsreel work in the Courtland Smith organisation.

Charles A. Thomson is chief of cultural relations. He is the former Latin American editor of the Foreign Policy Association.

According to Mr. Begg, there is already evidence of a great post-war demand for non-theatrical pictures from the United States. He cited figures from the Rockefeller committee's exhibitions in South America, showing an audience increase within six months from 6,000 to 100,000 persons monthly. This, he declared, is just touching the surface of the field. Technical, scientific, instruction and ideological pictures are all receiving an enthusiastic reception, he said.

Post-war films

Special production will be required for many of the post-war motion pictures, it was said. The facilities of Hollywood as well as the documentary and non-theatrical producers would be used, on contract, to make the special reels and to adapt existing pictures. Many would be scored in foreign languages while others, particularly the technical and scientific pictures destined for limited audiences, would be sent abroad with written translations of the English titles and sound track.

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR

Sir, To see the better Ministry of Information films one at a time is sometimes quite pleasant. To see a miscellaneous batch of home and overseas, theatrical and non-theatrical, all at the same time, is one of the most unpleasant surprises that anyone who is interested in winning the war, in giving a good impression to our allies, or in film making, could possibly have. These are the films that were shown:

The day that saved the world. A long reel: the subject in the Ministry's own words, "Proving that Britain won the first victory over the Nazis."

Poland's New Front. The Polish army in Russia.

Newfoundland at war. Visual letters home from the Newfoundland soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Free house. A five-minuter of sailors from all the allied navies proving through the example of beer why things have got to be different after the war.

India in action. A tribute to Indian troops who have fought in the various African battles.

Women away from home. A five-minuter explaining how women who go away to work in factories get on.

Individually one or two of the films weren't too bad; but collectively they were just depressing.

The M.O.I. Films Division will undoubtedly say the films were not supposed to be seen together, and in some months' time I expect they will also be able to say that the individual films like *Newfoundland at war* were very successful in the countries or special fields for which they were made. But all the same, seeing a collection of Ministry films together is pretty depressing. The reason: because in the whole lot there was not a shred of hope, not a constructive idea; there was nothing definitely negative about them, but there was certainly nothing even approaching positive.

It is no good comparing them to Russian films; the circumstances are so different. But try Canada: here is a country that in itself has been fairly remote from the war. But the films that they have produced have been vital and hopeful: people may disagree about the style, but at the end you are stimulated, and Canada, the war, and life, seem just a bit easier.

Britain obviously has no policy: not even a dishonest one. The Films Division's policy seems to be to give the public all the factual information that you can—don't try and clear up what is happening politically or with the war—don't put out any positive ideas—just stick to information and you will be all right—if you do go off the information line the films won't be shown anyway. We are not going to risk our jobs for any films.

The memorandum they put out the other day for feature producers on what was good and what was bad, was sound and sensible—the only trouble is that the Ministry—maybe because of pressure from above and lack of fighting spirit in themselves—can't—won't—don't try to make films themselves on the lines of their own memorandum.

The personnel of the Films Division is better than most similar people in the Civil Service. They have produced a vast number of films: they have succeeded despite the film trade in getting them shown. If they were replaced the next lot would probably be fifty times worse—we've all seen a British Council film. But even so is it worth their time and the one hundred odd people who make the films time—to go on turning out this information stuff? It is time they sat down quietly and had a look what is on their credit side and what is on their debit side. They have reached a peak on production and distribution, they haven't even started climbing on vitality, hope, honesty—determination.

If they are being held down from above it is time they made a fight for it, win or lose. If they don't the Films Division and the people they employ to make their films are wasted man-power, materials and money.

Yours, etc.,

REWINDER.

SHORTS BOOKINGS AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

(The following shorts bookings are selected from a list covering its members supplied by the News & Specialised Theatres Association.)

	Week commencing
A Modern Miracle	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 14
All the World's a Stage	
The Tatler Theatre, Chester	14th
Arrow Points	
The Classic, Portsmouth	13th
At the Country Fair	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	6th
Australia Marches with Britain	
The News Theatre, Bristol	6th
Beautiful Ontario	
The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	Aug. 30th
Birds in Spring	
Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow	23rd
Calling All Girls	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Sept. 6th
Cavalcade of Aviation	
The Tatler Theatre, Chester	7th
The Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	13th
Coastline	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 30th
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	Sept. 13th
Flashing Blades	
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	Sept. 6th
Gardens of England	
The Classic, Baker Street, W.1	Aug. 30th
The News Theatre, Leeds	31st
The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	Sept. 6th
Getting His Wings	
The News Theatre, Birmingham	Aug. 23rd
The News Theatre, Manchester	30th
Heroes of the Atlantic	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd
The News Theatre, Leeds	31st
Highway of Friendship	
Eros, W.1	30th
Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Sept. 6th
Historic Virginia	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 23rd
Information No. 5—Wendell Willkie Guest of Honour	
The Vogue, S.W.17	Sept. 6th
Information Please No. 12	
The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	Aug. 23rd
John Bulls' Other Army	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Sept. 6th
Journey in Tunisia	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	6th
Junior Battle Fleet	
Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 23rd
Man Who Changed the World	
Embassy, Notting Hill Gate	Sept. 13th
March of Time No. 13—7th Year	
Classic, S.W.17	Aug. 23rd
March of Time No. 1, 8th Year—Indian Crisis	
The Vogue, S.W.17	30th
Classic, Hendon, N.W.4	30th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Sept. 13th
March of Time No. 2, 8th Year—India at War	
Classic, Baker Street, W.1.	Aug. 23rd
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1	23rd
Eros Theatre, W.1	23rd
World's News Theatre, W.2	23rd
Victoria Street News Theatre, S.W.1	24th
Classic, Southampton	30th
News Theatre, Aberdeen	30th
Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	Sept. 6th
Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow	6th
Tayler Theatre, Manchester	6th
Tatler Theatre, Leeds	7th
Tatler Theatre, Chester	7th
The News Theatre, Leeds	7th
Mickey's Birthday	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	6th
Miracle Makers	
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1	Aug. 30th
Modern New Orleans	
Classic, South Croydon	Sept. 6th
Morning Paper	
The News Theatre, Birmingham	6th
The News Theatre, Bristol	13th
The News Theatre, Leeds	14th
Nature's Artisans	
The News Theatre, Leeds	7th
Nature's U-Boats	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 24th
Tatler Theatre, Chester	31st
Our Film	
Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow	Sept. 6th
The News Theatre, Bristol	13th
The News Theatre, Birmingham	13th
Over the Downs	
The Tatler Theatre, Birmingham	13th
Paint Pots	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	6th
Peaceful Quebec at War	
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	13th
Ships of the Sea	
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	Aug. 30th
So you think you know Music	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Sept. 6th
So Now You Know	
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	13th
Song of the Clyde	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 23rd
Soviet Schoolchild	
The News Theatre, Leeds	24th
Superman No. 2	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 14th
Take it or Leave it No. 4	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	13th
The African To-day	
Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	6th
The Fighting 69th and a Half	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 31st
Thrills of the Sea	
News Theatre, Aberdeen	30th
Through the Woods	
The News Theatre, Bristol	16th
Trees	
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	Sept. 6th
U-Boats in the Pond	
The News Theatre, Bristol	6th
Where Four Continents Meet	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 23rd
Winter Serenade	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	24th

FEATURE REVIVALS

Bitter Sweet	
Classic, S.W.17	Aug. 30th
Classic, South Croydon	30th
Divorce of Lady X	
Tatler Theatre, Leeds	24th
General Suvorov	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	17th
Freedom Radio	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	Sept. 7th
Hurricane	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	14th
It's a Date	
Tatler Theatre, Leeds	7th
Jeannie	
Classic, S.W.17	6th
Major Barbara	
Classic, S.W.17	Aug. 23rd
Classic, South Croydon	30th
Embassy, Notting Hill Gate	Sept. 6th
No, No, Nannette	
Embassy, Notting Hill Gate	Aug. 30th
Pygmalion	
Classic, Southampton	23rd
The Duke of Westpoint	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	24th
Till We Meet Again	
Tatler Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 14th
Topper Takes a Trip	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	Aug. 31st
Victory	
Classic, Baker Street, W.1.	30th

SIGHT and SOUND

The Autumn Issue is now OUT

6d.

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